

The President's Daily Brief

8 April 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Communist military activity has increased sharply in the southern provinces, but continues at a reduced level in the north. (Page 1)

Moscow is expected to make a statement today on the Vietnam fighting. (Page 2)

On Page 3, we discuss the motives behind the USSR's avid courting of Iraq.

Satellite photography shows that Peking continues to make substantial progress in the construction of new jet airfields and underground facilities for aircraft storage and maintenance. (Page 5)

Panama has again shifted its tactics on canal treaty negotiations. (Page 6)

The Argentine Government is troubled by extensive rioting stemming from economic problems. (Page 7)

Lao Prime Minister Souvanna is seeking additional air support in the Long Tieng area. (Page 8)

Contrary to earlier indications, Chilean President Allende did not make a major issue of the ITT affair in his 6 April speech. (Page 8)

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***SOUTH VIETNAM**

Communist military activity has increased sharply in the southern provinces, but continues at a reduced level in the north. In the delta, the Communists yesterday launched a widespread series of ground probes and shelling attacks on government positions in five provinces. These actions were coupled with sapper attacks on several key highway bridges. Communist forces are reported to have overrun Kien Thien district town in Chuong Thien Province, and several outposts farther north in the Vinh Long - Sa Dec area have come under heavy attack. Regimental-size Communist forces are reported moving northwest of My Tho and into Chau Doc Province from Cambodia.

The enemy is also maintaining heavy pressure on South Vietnamese positions in Military Region 3. In Binh Long Province, Communist forces captured the district town of Loc Ninh, and have conducted heavy shelling attacks against An Loc, the provincial capital. They are also hitting the major South Vietnamese artillery base near Quan Loi. Enemy sappers are said to have knocked out several bridges along Route 13, the key road link between An Loc and Saigon, and have cut Route 1 just west of Saigon. Communications intelligence and clandestine reports suggest that the Communists are preparing for further heavy attacks in Binh Long, as well as in Tay Ninh Province, where elements of the enemy's 7th Division may be headed.

In the north, communications intelligence suggests that Hue may soon be the target of a combined rocket-infantry assault. A prisoner claims the Communists are constructing access routes to enable armor, artillery, and infantry units to move on the city. An intercepted message of 7 April disclosed plans to overrun a key fire support base west of the city.

Some Communist antiaircraft artillery and surface-to-air missile units in the areas immediately north and south of the DMZ are relocating to new positions to reduce their vulnerability to air attack.

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The North Vietnamese apparently are supplementing their forces in southern North Vietnam. There are signs in enemy communications that elements of the 325th Division--the only regular division remaining in North Vietnam--are moving from the Hanoi area to the southern panhandle.

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USSR - NORTH VIETNAM

Moscow still has not commented authoritatively on recent developments in Vietnam. The Soviets are reporting routinely on the fighting in the South, but the bulk of their propaganda is directed against US bombing raids over the North. The Soviets quote extensively from third party condemnations of recent US actions, but do not directly link the increased bombing raids to the North Vietnamese offensive. According to a Radio Moscow commentator, Moscow will make a TASS statement today in support of the one issued by the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry on 6 April attacking the US bombing. The Soviets released a formal government statement endorsing North Vietnamese condemnations of the bombings last December.

Yesterday Pravda front-paged a 65th birthday message to North Vietnamese party boss Le Duan in which the Soviet leaders reiterated their support for the Vietnamese Communists in general terms. This is in keeping with usual Soviet practice. Le Duan received similar treatment on his 60th birthday when he was only number two man in the North Vietnamese hierarchy. Also yesterday, Premier Kosygin, in Iraq, expressed warm solidarity with the North Vietnamese people but did not specifically mention the current offensive.

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USSR-IRAQ

Soviet-Iraqi relations, which have blown hot and cold over the years, are now warming up considerably. There have been several high level visits recently, and a number of important military and economic agreements have been reached. Defense Minister Grechko visited Baghdad in December and Premier Kosygin is there now. The major agreements thus far include a Soviet promise of over \$200 million in military aid and the provision of extensive money, equipment, and expertise to help Iraq develop an oil producing capacity independent of the western oil companies. The next step may be the signing of a treaty of friendship, which Kosygin could announce during his current visit.


We believe the Soviets are moving quickly to take advantage of strongman Saddam Tikriti's eagerness to end Baghdad's isolation within the Arab world. Moscow sees an opportunity to establish a military and political position in the Middle East independent of the demands of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Soviet presence in Egypt. This would also serve to remind President Sadat that Moscow has other allies in the area besides Egypt.

In addition, Moscow most likely believes that a stronger position in Baghdad would facilitate Soviet efforts to prevent Iraqi-Iranian hostilities, which could sour its relations with Tehran and damage Moscow's long-term interests in the Persian Gulf. The Soviets would view a friendship treaty with Iraq much as they see their treaty with Egypt--that is, as a way of increasing Moscow's influence with the Arabs and of preventing uncontrollable military confrontations. Related to this is an effort to foster Iraqi internal stability. The Soviets are pressing the rebellious Kurds to enter a "national front" with the ruling Baath party.

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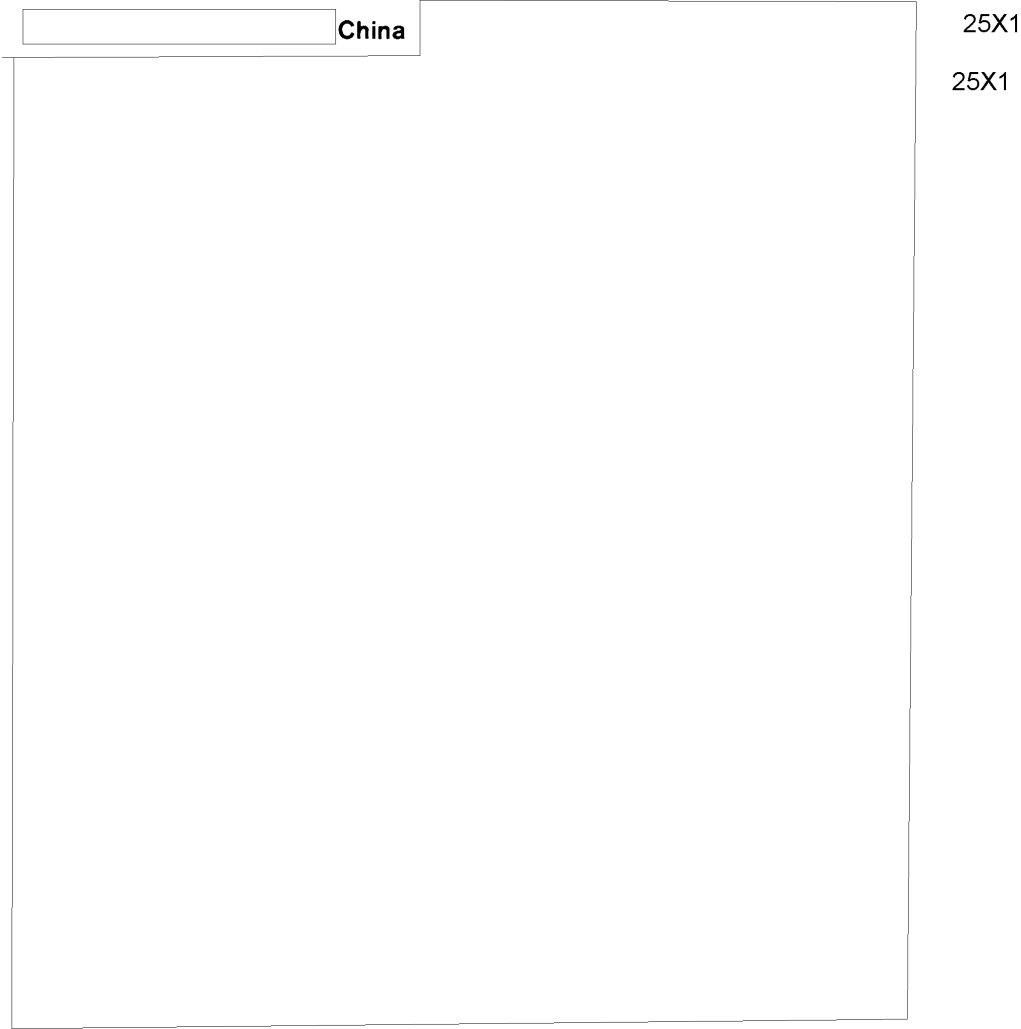
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Although Egypt remains central to Soviet policy in the Middle East, these recent activities show that Moscow is intent on strengthening its position in other "pro-gressive" Arab states. This could involve treaty relations not only with Iraq but possibly with Syria.



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CHINA

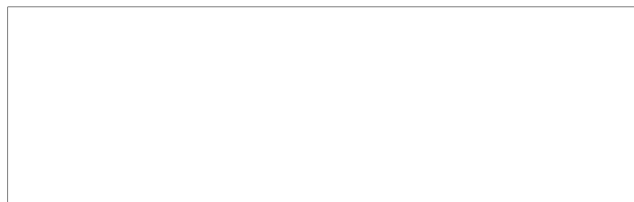
Satellite photography shows that Peking continues to make substantial progress in the construction of new jet airfields and underground facilities for aircraft storage and maintenance. More than 100 jet airfields have been newly constructed or extensively renovated throughout the country since 1964. China will soon have nearly 200 airfields suitable for combat operations, about one fourth of them able to support operations by TU-16 jet medium bombers.



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PANAMA

General Torrijos informed Ambassador Sayre on Thursday that Panama would not bring up the canal issue at next week's OAS General Assembly session. Moreover, after consulting with a personal emissary he sent to Washington in late March to review treaty prospects, Torrijos has finally agreed to translate his negotiating objectives into specific treaty language so that the US and Panamanian drafts can be compared and negotiated point by point.

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In the past Torrijos has only sporadically focused on the negotiations in any depth. He has, however, apparently become disenchanted with the advice of his own negotiators, and may now wish to participate personally in the drafting process.

We anticipate that the Panamanians will avoid polemics while writing their version of the treaty. If the US gives the draft a poor reception, however, Torrijos may quickly resume public saber-rattling and propaganda attacks on the US, especially if domestic difficulties increase.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY**ARGENTINA**

The Lanusse government has been unable to control extensive violence in the normally peaceful provincial city of Mendoza. Last Tuesday a mass demonstration over rising utility rates turned into a riot. Since then large gangs of youths have continued to rampage through the city's outskirts and an almost total general strike paralyzed the city yesterday, despite the arrest of the leaders of the regional labor confederation. Some 2,000 army troops and police are patrolling the streets, and precautionary measures have been taken in other cities. Peronist political and labor leaders have accused the government of provoking the violence.

Similar violence contributed to the downfall of President Lanusse's two predecessors. Even if the current trouble is confined to Mendoza, the show of popular discontent will place Lanusse under heavy pressure to correct the underlying economic causes. In any event labor's movement into more direct opposition is likely seriously to impede Lanusse's effort to return Argentina to elected government next year.

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NOTES

Laos: Prime Minister Souvanna called in Ambassador Godley yesterday to request additional air support in the Long Tieng area. He said he had just talked with Vang Pao, who was "extremely discouraged" because of the diversion of US air support to South Vietnam. The Thai commander at Long Tieng, General Dhep, also has charged US personnel with letting him down and jeopardizing the Thai irregular program. The Thai commanders hope to have Marshal Thanom and Souvanna appeal directly to President Nixon, via Dr. Kissinger, for more air support.

Chile: Contrary to earlier indications, President Allende did not make a major issue of the ITT affair in his speech on 6 April. [redacted]

[redacted] Allende decided that the ITT documents published last week in Chile are already serving his purposes. He apparently believes that the publicity of the ITT affair helps to deflect unrest in the armed forces and to strengthen Chile's position in debt renegotiations. Allende is said to believe that ITT's complicity in efforts to prevent his assumption of power is well-documented, but that official US involvement has not been proved.

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